



Navajo Nation Council – Office of the Speaker

Contact: Jerome Clark, Communications Director

Phone: (928) 871-7160

Cell: (928) 637-5603

Fax: (928) 871-7255

October 07, 2011

nnlb.communications@gmail.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

www.navajonationcouncil.org

Speaker attempting to solve issues stemming from line item vetoes

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – A week and half after President Ben Shelly line item vetoed portions of the FY2012 Tribal Operating Budget, the Speaker is left with the task of solving the problems that have ensued as a result of Shelly's contradictory action.

In addition to the line item vetoing of funding for the Little Folks Day Care Program, five Navajo Area Agency on Aging offices, the Navajo Green Commission, the Resources Committee, and the Legislative District Assistants for the 24 Council Delegates, the President vetoed personal travel and operating supplies from both the Office of the Speaker and the Office of Legislative Services.

In total, the Legislative Branch lost \$2.8 million. Included in that amount, \$397 thousand was vetoed from the Office of the Speaker and \$1.9 million from the Office of Legislative Services.

The line-item veto of the Speaker's travel budget directly impedes on essential roles and responsibilities of the Speaker. It disavows the Speaker of his ability to connect with Diné people on matters that are most important to them; to represent the people on issues that affect their daily life; and to attend to relationships at the state and federal level.

Earlier this week, Council was able to offer key testimony to the Arizona Independent Redistricting Commission (AIRC) and shortly after the testimony, the commission moved to adopt a proposed congressional map that was consistent with the Navajo Nation's position. Without the travel budget, travel to vital meetings such the AIRC hearing are not possible.

The vetoing of operating supplies further impedes on necessary daily operations by eliminating the budget for supplies such as postage, paper, software, printing, binding, and photocopying. In his memo to the Speaker, the President stated that the vetoes were necessary because they were "excessive."

In addition, Council Delegates are left wondering about the Legislative District Assistants who were intended to assist with such tasks as tracking resolutions; compiling and analyzing data for special projects; serving as liaisons and addressing individual inquiries; attending and reporting on chapter meetings; composing correspondence; preparing written reports; and preparing information for presentations. For the time being, Council Delegates will have to continue with their hectic work and travel schedules.

It has been previously argued that US senators typically cover more land and serve more people in their daily work so Council Delegates should also be able to do the same. But, the needs of Diné people are different because communication between Diné elected leaders and community members are more complex and K'è based than elected leaders outside of the Navajo Nation.

The effect of the line item vetoes were detailed in a memo by Marcelino R. Gomez, Assistant Attorney General, "As a result of the line item vetoes by the President on September 22, 2011, a portion of the annual revenue projection is left unappropriated for Fiscal Year 2012. This portion is available for appropriation for Fiscal Year 2012.

"In addition, it is available for appropriation for recurring expenses because it is based on a recurring revenue projection. As a result, it is not limited by the limitations on supplemental appropriations as stated in 12 N.N.N §820(L). These amounts may be appropriated either by amendments to the 2012 Navajo Nation Fiscal Year Budget or by Supplemental Appropriations under 12 N.N.C §820(L)."

The Speaker is now tasked with alleviating the problems introduced by President Shelly's line item vetoes, which were initially intended as a 'checks and balances' and not as a device for crippling necessary daily operations.

Before further actions are taken, the Speaker is patiently waiting for a productive response, from the President, to his inquiries to resolve the matter. Without prior communication, there is still substantial risk the President will veto any actions taken by Council to restore full operation.

###